



International Association  
for  
Christian Education



Intereuropean Commission on  
Church and School

# newsletter

August 2015, No 7

## Editorial

Can Europe be rescued? Alarm bells are ringing everywhere. What kind of circus has been started in the context of the financial negotiations with Greece this summer? Commentators spoke about shambles, split, and humiliation; politicians came up with excessive mutual accusations including genocide, and even the European well-esteemed sociologist Jürgen Habermas stated in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, “that a helpless European Council is effectively declaring itself politically bankrupt“. Shall we block our ears to this or just despair with Europe? In the journal *ZEIT* Bernd Ulrich speaks about an “auto-aggressive move that can be experienced in the European debate now” and closes with the statement: “Hopefully the situation will never become as bad as the atmosphere.” How can we as educators react in such a situation? What can we transmit to young people in our countries and how can we set an example?

First: Rhetoric disarmament! Temperance in speech is a Christian virtue. Also, words can catch fire, in public and in private life. Rightly the Council of Europe has launched its campaign “No Hate Speech!” Effect-based scenarios of catastrophe in media pushes the citizens into the arms of populists. Also, in day-to-day politics black and white terms promote simple thinking and complicate balanced solutions.

Second: Look slightly further ahead! Long term thinking helps to value problems, accepts disturbances as normal elements of lively developments and helps to identify the big challenges for Europe such as poverty and war at our borders, disruption of our relationship with Russia, energy and climate policy.

Third: Understand the ethical basics and exercise them on which we can build a peaceful living together and a common future. These are efforts towards justice, mutual respect and support for each other, or as a participant in Bad Wildbad noted in her final feedback, “solidarity as a virtue and an ongoing process shaped by respect and dignity“!

We wish all our readers a relaxing late summer and a good start in the new academic year at school and at university!

Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer and Dr Wim Kuiper (iV)  
Dr Tania ap Sïon and Dr Peter Schreiner (ICCS)

## Information from IV and ICCS

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### **Impressed by freedom and diversity of Christian schools – study tour in the Netherlands**

VERUS, the umbrella organisation of Protestant schools in the Netherlands, was the host for a group of head teachers and experts who visited the Netherlands from 3-7 March 2015. A well-balanced programme included visits to schools of different age groups and educational ethos and introduced them to special elements of the Dutch school system that differs from other European countries by its high percentage of schools with a confessional character. The variety of pedagogical models and the different expressions of Protestant identity of the schools created awe and wonder. A summary of these impressions in German, English and Dutch can be found at <http://www.int-v.org> under „Proceedings“. IV and ICCS will continue with this series of study visits for head teachers, and next will be a repetition of this offer in March 2016.

### **“Seeking Solidarity in a troubled Europe” – Educators from ten countries at the European Seminar in Bad Wildbad**

The 30 participants (including the speakers) of the European seminar for teachers, organized by IV and ICCS from 7<sup>th</sup>-10 April 2015, came from Belgium, Germany, France, Great Britain, Hungary Latvia, Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

The host was the the Academy for in-service training and personal development at schools in Baden-Wuerttemberg. High-ranking experts and school practitioners had a vivid exchange about the conditions to train and exercise solidarity in education and schools, and they learned about many educational strategies and models supporting solidarity. A report is available at [http://www.int-v.org/index.php?a=2015040710\\_Bericht](http://www.int-v.org/index.php?a=2015040710_Bericht). There you find also the text of a number of the contributions.

### **IV & ICCS: Membership of the Church of Ireland**

The Church of Ireland (<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/>) has become a member of ICCS and of IV. Both organisations have long established contacts with Dr Ken Fennelly, the school officer of the Church of Ireland, most recently at the meeting of ICCS correspondents in April 2014 and at the IV General Assembly 2015 in Papá. Both boards are pleased about the new member and hope for rich mutual exchange.

## Updates from the project “500 Protestant Schools worldwide celebrate 500 Years of Reformation “

Now more than 490 schools are registered at [www.schools500reformation.net](http://www.schools500reformation.net). As a new instrument there is now an Internet-Forum for dialogue and exchange between students, teachers and others who are involved in the project. Via <http://forum.schools500reformation.net/> you can use the page of the forum which consists of many thematic or target group oriented sub-fora. The initiators are hoping that it will be heavily used.

The international steering group met on 20-21 April 2015 in Woerden (the Netherlands) to evaluate the project so far and to develop ideas for the time up to the jubilee as well as for the time afterwards. The steering group accompanies the work of the office of the project at the University of Bamberg that is organized by Simone Kohlmann. The office also publishes the Newsletter that includes current information about the project. The latest issue of July 2015 can be downloaded at <http://www.schools500reformation.net/newsletter>. Interactive participation is also possible through facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/schools500reformation>.

“500 Protestant Schools – One World. Towards the Reformation Jubilee 2017“ is the title of the second international conference. Head teachers especially from all over the world are invited for encounter, exchange and networking with one another. The event takes place from 15-17<sup>t</sup> October 2015 in Wittenberg (working language: English). Highlights of the programme include workshops such as “What makes my School a Protestant School”, “How to Shape the Future in Protestant Schools”, “Planning the Reformation Jubilee 2017 (with Regional Focus)”. The International Association for Christian Education (IV) is co-organizer of the conference.

## ICCS & CoGREE: Klingenthal Colloquy in 2016

Every second year ICCS & CoGREE organize a colloquy at Klingenthal near Strasbourg. The objective of the event is to learn about current developments in education activities of the Council of Europe and to discuss how to connect our own activities with these. At the colloquy in 2014 issues and projects of intercultural education and the religious dimension were the focus of the programme. The next colloquy is planned for 10-14 October 2016. More information will be available at the end of this year. Please note the date in your diary.

## ICCS: Crossings and Crosses: RE in border regions of Europe

The *University of Södertörn in Huddinge*, Stockholm, organized a comparative, interdisciplinary project from 2009 to 2012 to investigate how borders influence and shape the context and content of religious education in school. They organized research in schools of border places and regions. Eight case studies have now been published. At an expert symposium in May a publication was delivered with the title: *Crossings and Crosses. Borders, Educations, and Religions in Northern Europe*, Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, edited by Jenny Berglund, Thomas Lundén and Peter Strandbrink with case studies and other contributions related to the research context (ISBN 978-1614517542). At the symposium in Stockholm Dr Peter Schreiner presented his contribution in the book with the title: “Religious education in the European context.“

## **IV: Enabling for Dialogue– IV-General Assembly 2015**

Also in 2015 the General Assembly of the International Association for Christian Education (IV) will be combined with an educational study day. The theme is: “Dialogue ability in a pluralistic society as an aim of education of Christian schools.” The programme also includes the reception of new members and an enlargement of the board. The meeting will take place on 29-30 November in Bern (Switzerland). The host will be two Education Centres with a Protestant tradition (Campus Muristalden and NMS: New Middle School).

## **Best-practice-exchange in Switzerland – ESCH-Annual Meeting 2015 in Zürich**

The forum of Protestant Schools in Switzerland (ESCH) brings together schools of Protestant tradition in the German speaking part of Switzerland. Its annual meetings create an important platform for exchange and for the introduction of innovative educational initiatives. In addition, every second year, the Catholic schools of inner Switzerland take part in the event. A report about the annual meeting on 23 January 2015 in Zürich, written by Bertrand Knobel, is available at: [http://www.int-v.org/downloads/2015\\_TreffenEvSchuleCH-Zuerich.pdf](http://www.int-v.org/downloads/2015_TreffenEvSchuleCH-Zuerich.pdf)

## **Cooperative-confessional RE on the agenda – AEED-Meeting of Representatives in Münster**

The Association of Protestant Educators in Germany (AEED) continues its efforts for collaboration of the different confessions in teaching religious education. At its Meeting of Representatives from 6-8 March 2015 a report was given about the debate of the “Manifest of Würzburg“ that was published in 2014 by the AEED, together with its Catholic sister association dkv – professional association for religious education. The associations want to announce the positive experiences with a cooperative confessional approach to RE and to promote further development. The Meeting in Münster also elected a new board. Martin Pfeifenberger (Nuerenberg) was elected as new chair person. More details at: <http://www.aeed.de>

## **School Confederations planning a new structure - AGES-General Assembly in Nueremberg**

The Association of Protestant School Confederations (AGES) brings together associations of head teachers from all over Germany. Their general assembly on 13 March 2015 in Nueremberg showed that the School Confederations are an important platform for educational exchange. They organize practical in-service courses on themes such as the role of the teacher, burnout, inclusion, training of school advisors and head teachers.

The conference on economic issues deals with housekeeping and juridical issues that are of common interest. Since most of the members of AGES collaborate already in many federal states and territorial churches, there are initial ideas to create a Protestant School Confederation of Germany in place of the regional associations.

## **The Netherlands: Protestant and Catholic Schools on a common way**

VERUS – *Vereniging voor christelijk onderwijs* (many may know the former name Besturenraad) is the biggest member organisation of IV. As an umbrella and service organisation, to date, VERUS represents nearly all Protestant schools with more than 2,000 schools. On 21 May 2015

the organisation merged with its Catholic sister association after a process of some years. Now it is called *Vereniging voor katholieke en christelijk onderwijs*. (In the Dutch language “christelijk” includes the broad spectrum of Protestant denominations.) The new organisation represents now more than 60 percent of the Dutch schools. Pooling of power and increased efficiency are the main aims of the unification, but “unity in diversity” will stay; as the Chair of the board Dr Wim Kuiper writes, “Catholics and Protestants are rolls of the same pastry but baked in a different way.”

## CoGREE and Member Organisations

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### EFTRE: Board Meeting in Dublin

The board of EFTRE, which consists of a national representative of each country of EFTRE member organizations, met for its annual meeting on 7 March 2015 in Dublin at the Irish Centre for Religious Education. The main activity was to discuss and work with the Council of Europe



document “Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education” and to prepare the 2016 conference in Vienna, organized in cooperation with CoGREE.

### EFTRE & CoGREE: Common Conference in Vienna 2016

EFTRE organises its next European Conference in cooperation with CoGREE. It takes place from 31 August – 3 September 2016 at the University of Vienna with the theme: “Believing, belonging, behaving: Challenges for Religious Education in the 21st Century.” The following have already been confirmed as speakers at the conference: Professor Dr Paul Zulehner, University of Vienna, Professor Dr Bert Roebben, University of Dortmund, Professor Dr Denise Cush, Bath Spa University and Dr Peter Schreiner (Comenius-Institut/CoGREE). The conference will deal with changes and processes of transformation concerning religion and with consequences for religious education from an education policy perspective, from a research perspective and from a school practice perspective. So, three main areas will be the focus: education policy, research and educational practice. In addition to plenary presentations a number of workshops and ex-

cursions in Vienna will be organised. More information and the invitation to the conference will be published in the autumn at: [www.eftre.org](http://www.eftre.org) and also [www.cogree.com](http://www.cogree.com).

## CEC and CPCE

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### CEC: Thematic Reference Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship



One of ten planned Thematic Reference Groups of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) will deal with developments in the field of “Education for Democratic Citizenship”. It is good news that there are ten nominations for the group from CEC member churches and from organizations in partnership with CEC. The group will have its first meeting in October 2015 in Strasbourg. Dr Peter Schreiner is a member of the group with a mandate of both the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and ICCS.

### CEC: European Secretaries meet in November in Strasbourg

From 16-18 November 2015 the European secretaries of the member churches of CEC as well as representatives of the organisations in partnership are invited to a meeting in Strasbourg. The theme is “Conflicts and Reconciliation: The role of the Council of Europe.” The programme includes meetings with the Director of Programmes of the Council of Europe, Verena Taylor and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer will participate at this event on behalf of IV & ICCS.

### CPCE: “Focal Points for Protestant Education in Europe – Contributions of Protestant Churches for a European civil society“



This is the title of the long planned (with participation of ICCS and IV) forum on education that takes now place on 26-28 October 2015 at the Protestant Academy Tutzing. Partners in cooperation with CPCE are the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Bavaria and “bildung evangelisch in Europa“ (beE). The aim of the conference is to describe the common responsibility for education of the churches in Europe and to identify their active role. Among the focal points are “Protestant Schools“ (chair: Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer), “Voluntary service between church-internal training and commitment in civil society“, “Religious education in local churches in the face of discontinued traditions and a new religious diversity“, and “Society related education by example of the Protestant Academies.” Invitation and programme: [http://www.int-v.org/downloads/2015102028\\_ProgrammGEKE2015.pdf](http://www.int-v.org/downloads/2015102028_ProgrammGEKE2015.pdf)

## CPCE: RE at European Schools

“The future of religious education at European schools – schools of the European Union at places where there are institutions of the EU” - [<http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?l=3>] is the theme of a working group of CPCE with representatives of member churches, from European schools and from COMECE. The reason for the establishment of the group are planned revisions of the structure of the secondary level II at the European schools that include also a reform of the existing confessional approach to RE. The next meeting of the group will take place in Tutzing on 28<sup>th</sup> of October.

## Council of Europe and European Union

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### Council of Europe: Consultations on “Signposts” in Greece and Germany

The Council of Europe has published a document: *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* (Straßburg 2014) that deals with issues of recognition and reception of religion and non-religious worldviews in the context of intercultural education in schools. On 15 May 2015 a first consultation based on *Signposts* happened in Greece. Dr Claudia Lenz from the European Wergeland Centre in Oslo and Dr Peter Schreiner from the Coordinating Group on Religion in Education in Europe CoGREE and the Comenius-Institut participated as experts (see: <http://www.theewc.org/news/view/crete.expert.consultation.on.signposts>).

At this event the new syllabus on Orthodox religious education for primary and secondary school, mandated by the Ministry of Education in 2011, was discussed and connecting points with *Signposts* were mentioned.

Another consultation is planned for 13 November 2015 at the University of Hildesheim in Germany with experts from intercultural education as well as from religious education. At the Council of Europe’s Conference on “Human Rights and Democracy in Action: Addressing Radicalisation and Extremism through Education”, 24-25 September 2015 in Strasbourg, *Signposts* will be also presented as a project.

### Council of Europe: New Action Plan adopted

In May 2015 the Committee of Ministers adopted an action plan to combat extremism and radicalization. In the introduction it said: “It is the task of the Council of Europe to safeguard European values and individual rights at pan-European level.” The six-page document serves two main aims:

1. To reinforce the legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism;
2. To prevent and fight violent radicalization through concrete measures in the public sector.

In the document it is expressed that the *Signposts* document has a high priority and shall be distributed widely. This includes translations in different languages that are already in the pipe-

line. <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/may/coe-violent-extremism-radicalisation%20leading-action-plan.pdf> is the address to download the text of the action plan.

### **Council of Europe: Exchange with religious communities in Sarajevo**

On 8-9 September 2015 the eighth Exchange of the Council of Europe about the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue with representatives of religious communities and NGOs will take place in Sarajevo. The working title is: "Building inclusive societies together." The conference will underline the necessity to avoid radicalisation and violent extremism and to find innovative and successful ways out of it.

#### **Colofon**

This Newsletter is edited under the responsibility of the Board of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School and the Board of the International Association for Christian Education.

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**ISSN: 0921-0393**

**IV & ICCS Newsletter in English, German and French is published electronically on:**  
<http://www.iccsweb.org> and <http://www.int-v.org>.